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Before the FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION Washington, D.C. 20554

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In the Matter of	AUG 1 8 1997
Access Reform)	CC Docket No. 96-262 FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
Price Cap Performance Review for Local Exchange Carriers	CC Docket No. 94-1
Transport Rate Structure and Pricing)	CC Docket No. 91-213
End User Common Line Charges	CC Docket No. 95-72

COMMENTS OF AMERITECH ON PETITIONS FOR RECONSIDERATION

A. Introduction and Summary.

Ameritech respectfully submits its comments to the Petitions for Reconsideration and/or Clarification ("PFR") filed in this proceeding. Ameritech generally supports the PFR filed by USTA and the comments being filed by it, and also supports Sprint's proposal that portions of the Transport Interconnection Charge ("TIC") not be shifted to deaveraged transport rates. However, Ameritech opposes AT&T's proposal that a portion of switched and dedicated access charges attributable to trunk ports be allocated to rates for unbundled network element ("UNE") charged to competitive local exchange carriers ("CLECs").

B. Ameritech support USTA's PFR.

As a member of the United States Telephone Association ("USTA") Ameritech supports the PFR filed in the matter by USTA on July 11, 1997. In particular,

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Ameritech believes that two of the issues raised by USTA are of vital importance and should be expeditiously resolved.

- 1. Marketing expenses should be recovered from all lines, not just business lines, since these expenses are legitimate costs that benefit all subscribers. Moreover, there is no credible proof that recovery of these costs from residential lines will have an adverse impact on universal service. In any event, the cap on the residential subscriber line charge ("SLC") still exists to further public policy interests in limiting the burden on residential end users. Reconsideration of this issue is critical to avoid an unreasonable implicit subsidy from business customers to residential customers. That is to say, since both residence and business customers benefit from these marketing costs, business customers should not be required to foot the entire bill. This implicit subsidy violates the fundamental principle that subsidies should be explicit and recovered in a competitively-neutral manner. In today's competitive marketplace, such implicit subsidies induce competitive dislocations and cannot be sustained in the long run.
- 2. The Primary Interexchange Carrier Charge ("PICC") should be assessed on a trunk equivalency basis on Centrex lines. Resolution of this issue is of vital importance in order not to unduly burden interexchange carriers ("IXCs") that serve Centrex customers with excessive PICC charges versus those that are assessed to IXCs that serve private branch exchange ("PBX") customers. There is no cost basis for assessing PICC charges relative to Centrex customers that are 8 to 12 times higher than those assessed on comparable PBX systems. Since these excessive charges would be passed through by the IXCs to the end users, they would effectively deny to many end user customers reasonable access to Centrex service, even though it best meets their needs.

See, 47 U.S.C. §254(d)(e); and First Report and Order released in this proceeding on May 16, 1997 at ¶11, ("Access Reform Order").

Other important issues raised by USTA in its PFR that deserve the Commission's prompt attention are:

- 1. Implementation of higher PICC on non-primary residential lines should be delayed until a year after the Commission issues a specific definition of the term "non-primary." This time is necessary for the local exchange carriers ("LECs") to implement system changes required to bill the charge. Ameritech opposes non-uniform PICC charges, but if they are required, LECs need time to develop and implement the necessary billing arrangements after they know to what lines the higher charges will apply.
- 2. The "X" productivity factor adjustments to access rates should not be allowed to reduce universal service fund contributions, since they are a subsidy and are thus not subject to productivity gains that underlie the X factor adjustments.
- 3. The Commission should clarify that the SLC applies when a business customer orders individual lines from multiple carriers.² In such a case, the customer is in fact obtaining multiple lines and should pay for those lines on the same basis as all other multi-line business customers. The Commission should close this loophole, so customers cannot evade paying their pro rata share of the SLC through the subterfuge of ordering service from several carriers.

If there are to be different PICC charges for additional residential lines, the same approach should be followed.

C. Ameritech agrees with the comments of USTA.

Ameritech has also read the comments being filed by USTA and generally supports them. In the following sections, Ameritech will not repeat arguments made by USTA, but will rather supplement them and address additional items.

D. The PICC should be assessed on a uniform basis relative to both business and residence service.

The Commission's Access Reform Order requires that a new PICC be assessed relative to business and residence customers to recover common line revenues that are not recovered through the SLC and common line charges. However, the PICC is subject to ceilings of \$.53 for primary residence and single line business lines; \$1.50 for non-primary residence lines; and \$2.75 for multi-line business lines. Several commenters argue that assessing a higher PICC relative to multi-line business lines is just another form of improper implicit subsidy from business to residential users. Ameritech agrees there is no underlying cost basis justifying this differentiation, and that the PICC rate structure adopted by the Commission thus creates an implicit subsidy.

Implicit subsidies are contrary to the Commission's policy. As the Commission recognized, Congress specified that universal service support "should be explicit" and "[e]very telecommunications carrier that provides interstate telecommunications services shall contribute on an equitable and non-discriminatory basis. . . ." As a result, the Commission charged the states with the responsibility for "identifying

Access Reform Order at ¶94.

Comptel, 2-6; Call-America 2-8; County of Los Angeles 2-8.

⁵ 47 U.S.C. §254(d)(e). See, Access Reform Order at ¶4.

intrastate implicit universal service support..." By the same token, this Commission should not create implicit subsidies in its own rules.

Moreover, since the PICC charge is only assessed by incumbent LECs ("ILECs"), rather than by all local competitors, it artificially inflates business rates of ILECs only, and is therefore not competitively-neutral. It will thus distort the operation of the competitive marketplace by creating a non-cost based price floor, and artificially making ILECs less competitive. The resulting competitive dislocations will in the long run inure to the detriment of both business and residence customers.

Several parties have requested that the Commission reduce the amount of the PICC relative to multi-line business lines and set the PICC at the same level as the residence PICC. Ameritech agrees that the PICC should be uniformly applied relative to both business and residence lines. However, in order to fully recover the underlying costs, it is essential that the uniform PICC be set at a level that recovers the entire revenue requirement, which is at a level somewhat higher than the current residence PICC and lower than the multi-line business PICC. As an alternative, the Commission could eliminate the transition period and implement the full charges on January 1, 1998.

E. There will be no double recovery of port costs.

In the Access Reform Order,⁹ the Commission established a new trunk port charge to recover the non-traffic sensitive costs that are currently recovered through

Supra at ¶11.

ACTA 2; TRA 5-12; U.S. Long Distance 2-3.

⁸ County of Los Angeles 9.

Access Reform Order ¶125-135.

the usage-based Local Switching rates. Ameritech strongly supports the Commission's determination that non-traffic sensitive costs should be recovered through a flat rate charge, because that methodology better matches the rates paid by a customer to the costs caused by that customer.

AT&T attacks the Access Reform Order, suggesting that this rate structure causes a double recovery of ILEC trunk port costs, when trunk ports are used to originate and terminate access traffic to customers served by CLECs through unbundled network elements ("UNE"). AT&T claims that ILECs' unbundled local switching ("ULS") rates also recover a portion of these trunk costs, and asks the Commission to proportionally reduce the access trunk port charge when it is used to carry traffic to or from a CLEC's customer served through a UNE.

AT&T is mistaken; there is no double recovery. AT&T's assertion that "virtually all price caps ILECs have a UNE local switching element that covers the full cost of the local switching functionality, including the 'trunk port'" is not factually correct as applied to Ameritech. Contrary to AT&T's assumption,

Ameritech has filed separate rate elements for unbundled trunk ports, unbundled line ports, and unbundled local switching in its intrastate UNE tariffs. Thus, a

CLEC are only charged a flat trunk port charge as a part of UNE rates when the port is dedicated to that particular CLEC. In that case, the CLEC, not Ameritech, assesses the access charge to the IXC. In cases where Ameritech carries the access traffic over its network for IXCs using Ameritech's switched access services, CLEC

¹⁰ AT&T 12-13.

ll Id.

trunk ports are not used to originate or terminate that traffic, and the corresponding costs of those ports are not recovered through the access charges assessed by Ameritech.

AT&T is also wrong, at least as to Ameritech, when it asserts that there is a need to apportion to UNE services a part of flat-rate trunk port charges paid by interexchange carriers. Ameritech only charges IXCs a flat-rate trunk port at the end office only, when they order direct-routed transport. In that case, the trunk port is dedicated to the IXC and is not used to serve any other customer, including CLECs. Thus, an IXC ordering a flat-rate trunk port only pays for the trunk port that has been dedicated to it.

F. The TIC should not be shifted to deaveraged transport rates.

In the Access Reform Order, ¹² the Commission directed that LECs using zone density pricing of transport remove from the TIC an amount equal to the difference between higher density and lower density zone rates, and shift it to the direct-trunked transport and the tandem-switched transport subcategories. This reassignment would be required for LECs that have deaveraged their transport rates and is renewed any time the LEC increases the differential between high and low density zones.

Sprint asks the Commission to reconsider its decision because it requires LECs to recover costs applicable to low density areas in rates for high density areas.¹³

Sprint points out that "[t]his runs against the very purpose of density-based deaveraging, by in effect forcing the LEC to raise high-density rates above costs to

¹² ¶227.

¹³ Sprint 7-8.

recover costs attributable to low-density areas." In support of its position, Sprint points out that:

Indeed, the predicate for requiring such costs to be removed from the TIC is the Commission's belief (see, ¶¶225-226) that special access rates (on which switched transport rates are based) did not fully reflect the costs of switched transport in low density areas 15 (emphasis supplied).

Ameritech agrees with Sprint that because the amounts being removed from the TIC reflect costs in low density areas, they should either remain in the TIC as a explicit subsidy to those areas, or be reassigned solely to transport rates in low density areas, as an exogenous adjustment. Arbitrarily shifting the TIC revenue requirement across-the-board to all deaveraged transport rates has four major flaws.

First, the Commission was misinformed when it found that direct trunked transport rates are receiving any subsidy from the TIC. Since direct trunked transport rates were initially based on special access rates and are now, for the most part, still set at the level of special access transport, the Commission's assumption of a subsidy implies that corresponding special access rates are also supported by the TIC. However, the rates for facility-based dedicated transport were set under the Commission's rules at compensatory levels, and there is no basis for any conclusion that they are subsidized by the TIC. Therefore, there is no justification to shift a portion of the TIC to transport rates in the first place.

Second, under price cap regulations, direct trunked transport and special access are in the same trunking basket and are also contained in the same Service Band Indices ("SBIs"). Thus, any change in SBIs resulting from shifting amounts

⁴ id.

¹⁵ id.

from the TIC to direct trunked transport would also affect special access rates. This is totally inappropriate. The TIC was created as a result of <u>switched</u> transport restructure, and should never affect special access.

Third, when zone pricing was implemented, many LECs did so by decreasing rates in zones 1 and 2, rather than increasing rates in any zone. This often meant a voluntary reduction in revenues. The Commission's rules did not allow increases in the TIC rate, so no zone-related amounts were shifted to the TIC. To the extent, if any, that low density area costs still remain in the TIC, they can be re-allocated as amounts associated with ports, terminations, multiplexers and any other elements are re-allocated on January 1, 1998. No special treatment for zone density pricing is needed.

Fourth, maintaining an arbitrary fixed differential between rates in high density versus low density zones is contrary to the concepts of cost or market based rates under price caps. The Commission has already established a separate SBI for each zone, and price cap LECs are thereby prevented from manipulating pricing across zones. Rather, price changes are limited by the allocation of productivity and exogenous changes. Consistent with competitive pricing principles, the Commission should at least allow the LEC the ability to adjust rates based upon cost and market factors, within these very tight constraints. Failure to do so will create further economic dislocations that will stifle and distort efficient competition to the detriment of end users.

G. Conclusion.

For the above reasons, the Commission should reconsider and clarify its holdings in this proceeding as outlined herein.

> Respectfully submitted, Michael J. Poblan

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CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I, Todd H. Bond, do hereby certify that a copy of the foregoing Comments of Ameritech on Petitions for Reconsideration has been served on the parties on the attached service list, via first class mail, postage prepaid, on this 18th day of August, 1997.

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